

## Iowa's Notable Dead

ISSN 0003-4827

No known copyright restrictions.

---

### Recommended Citation

"Iowa's Notable Dead." *The Annals of Iowa* 30 (1951), 554-560.

Available at: <https://doi.org/10.17077/0003-4827.7213>

Hosted by [Iowa Research Online](#)

## *Iowa's Notable Dead*

---

TRUMAN S. STEVENS, lawyer and jurist, died at Des Moines, Iowa, August 19, 1950; born on a farm near Montour, Tama county, Iowa, December 20, 1864, where he lived until 1881, and moved with his parents to a farm near Bagley, in Audubon county, Iowa; attended the public schools, graduated from the Guthrie county high school at Panora; taught school for a year and a half, being superintendent of schools at Bayard, Iowa; entered the law course at the State University of Iowa, graduating in 1890, in the same class with former Congressman Chas. E. Pickett, of Waterloo, and U. S. Senator Wm. S. Kenyon, of Fort Dodge; located at Hamburg, Iowa, in the practice of law in 1892; served as county attorney of Fremont county one term; appointed judge of the Fifteenth Iowa judicial district February 1, 1917, and to the supreme court of Iowa April 25, 1917; elected as supreme court judge in 1918, and re-elected in 1922 and 1928; had twice served as chief justice of the high court in 1923 and 1928; married in 1923 to Cora Patterson, who in 1948 preceded him in death, they having no children living, one daughter, Velma, having died December 14, 1910, at the age of thirteen, in memory of whom by provision in the will of the deceased a trust fund of \$75,000 is established, for the education of deserving girls in Drake University, Des Moines; served as president of the Iowa state bar association in 1923; entered the law firm of Cosson & Cosson in 1935, after retirement from public life, and at the time of his death the firm was known as Cosson, Stevens, Hauge & Cosson; a member of bar associations, the Masonic bodies and the Baptist church.

---

JOHN K. VALENTINE, attorney, former legislator and lieutenant governor, died at Centerville, Iowa, October 12, 1950; born at Oskaloosa, Iowa, February 5, 1904; received his early education in Centerville public schools; was graduated from the University of Wisconsin in 1926, and the law college of the State University of Iowa in 1929; formed a partnership that year with his father, H. E. Valentine, his brother Robert later joining the firm, and has since engaged in the practice of law at Centerville; elected state senator in 1932, and quickly became a leader among the Democrat members; appointed as a member of the state tax commission in 1935, and resigned in September 1936, to become a candidate for lieutenant governor, to which position he was elected in November and presided over the senate in the subsequent session; a candidate for re-election in 1938, but defeated by

B. B. Hickenlooper; appointed U. S. district attorney for southern Iowa in 1939, which office he resigned in 1940 to become the Democrat candidate for governor of Iowa, but was defeated by Geo. A. Wilson; became general counsel of the Iowa Southern Utilities company at Centerville in 1941, and a director in 1942; entered the U. S. navy and served as Lieutenant Commander until 1945; after which he devoted his entire time to the utility company, becoming vice president, which position he held until his death; served as a member of the state advisory committee on new rules for the procedure of the Iowa supreme court; held memberships in and was active in a large number of fraternal, civic and social clubs of Centerville, being a leader always in community projects and civic movements; survived by his wife, Billie, whom he married November 30, 1932, a brother, Robert, and a nephew, Dennis, his father dying April 2, 1937, and his mother on March 6, 1946.

---

LOUIS CHARLES KURTZ, hardware merchant and banker, died October 1, 1950, at Des Moines, Iowa, where he was born on November 28, 1867, son of L. H. Kurtz, pioneer tinsmith and hardware man; educated in Des Moines schools and took a business course at St. Benedict's college, Atchison, Kansas; entered the business with his father in 1884, at sixteen, and became president of the L. H. Kurtz Co. upon his father's death in 1923; started the plumbing and heating division, and later the wholesale hardware division of the business in 1905, and extended the firm's operations to Mason City, Iowa, in 1943; four generations of the family ultimately being in the management, including his father, himself, two sons and two grandsons; elected a director of the German Savings bank in 1904, and of the Des Moines National bank in 1915; became chairman of its board in 1922 and president in 1926, and after consolidation with the Iowa National bank became chairman of the board of the Iowa-Des Moines National bank in 1929; elected to the Des Moines school board in 1897, became its president in 1899, again in 1900 and the third time in 1902; served as Des Moines postmaster 1911-1915; active in club and political circles, being delegate from Iowa to the national Republican convention in 1920; was a zealous supporter of Sen. A. B. Cummins in his campaigns; married Alice E. McDonnell, of Des Moines, June 23, 1896, who survives him, they having celebrated their fifty-fourth wedding anniversary in June; surviving with Mrs. Kurtz are two sons, Louis Clarence, Bernard D., eleven grandchildren and six great-grandchildren; was a member of the Des Moines club, the Pioneer club, the Elks, the Greater Des Moines committee, the Knights of Columbus, the Dowling club, the Holy Name society, and the 50-Year club of the Iowa Retail Hardware association.

ALBERT W. MERRILL, educator, died at Des Moines, Iowa, October 26, 1950; born March 29, 1869, in Des Moines, the son of William and Elizabeth Lindsay Merrill; was graduated from West high school, Des Moines; received his bachelor of arts degree at Grinnell college in 1890, and his master of arts degree from Teachers college, Columbia university, New York, N. Y., in 1927; also an honorary doctor of laws degree from Drake university in 1937 and an honorary doctor of education degree from Grinnell college in 1940; beginning at eighteen taught country school to finance his way through Grinnell college; taught in the grades at Oswego, Illinois, and became principal; returned to Iowa to teach at Fort Dodge, and in 1892 became the first principal at North Des Moines high school; served as superintendent of schools in turn at Stuart Harlan and Waverly, Iowa, returning to Des Moines in 1901 as a mathematics and Latin teacher, and since had been associated with the Des Moines public schools except for a period between 1911-1918 when he taught in the St. Louis public schools; returned again to Des Moines in 1918 becoming principal of the North high school; became assistant superintendent of the Des Moines city schools in 1923, acting superintendent in 1934, superintendent in 1937, and retired in 1941, after fifty years in school work; was acting superintendent of the Dubuque schools 1942-45; active in church and civic affairs; a consultant in behalf of Salvation Army affairs, especially in relation to Booth Memorial hospital; presented a scroll two weeks prior to his death in recognition of outstanding service as a member of board of that organization at which time he was a life member; served as president of the Interdenominational Council of Churches; two children survive his first marriage with Louise Jessup, who died in 1910, a daughter, Miss Francis E. Merrill, teacher in the department of secretarial science in the college of business administration, Drake university, and a son, Edwin J. Merrill, teacher at Flint, Michigan; also married August 7, 1920 to Helen McGill, of Montezuma, Iowa, who survives, with their daughter, Mrs. Lloyd R. Heinzl, of St. Paul, and their son, Wm. R. Merrill, Des Moines, and six grandchildren.

---

JOHN P. TINLEY, attorney and jurist, died at Council Bluffs, Iowa, October 27, 1950; born in the 'Bluffs in 1871; the son of Matthew Hugh and Rosa Dolan Tinley, who removed to Iowa from Missouri in 1869; studied law in the office of his brother, Emmet Tinley, and admitted to the bar in 1892; began practice at Doon, in Lyon county, Iowa, remaining there for ten years, and while there served as mayor for six years; moved to Snohomish, Washington, but returned to Council Bluffs in 1906, remaining there until his death; took his son, John Jr. in law partnership in 1926,

and later his daughter, Mrs. Patricia Tinley Duckworth, became associated with the firm; retired from public life in 1950 after eight years upon the municipal bench and seven years as judge of the district court previously served; specialized in criminal law in the private practice and had defended at least twenty-five first degree murder cases in the course of his court work, being widely known as a court orator; did special work with juveniles when on the municipal bench; rode horseback daily until about eight years ago, when he gave up riding upon the death of his favorite steed, Red Roy, a half-brother of the famous racer, Man O' War; a Democrat and belonged to the Catholic church and many fraternal lodges and clubs, including many bar associations; survived besides his two children in the law firm, by his widow, Margaret, three daughters, Beatrice and Gertrude at home and Mrs. Donald T. Fox, a brother, Dr. Matthew A. Tinley of Council Bluffs, two sisters, Dr. Mary L. Tinley and Miss Aurelia R. Tinley, both of Council Bluffs, nine grandchildren and a great-grandson.

---

MARY L. STEVER, educator and humanitarian, died at Fairfield, Iowa, August 19, 1950; born in the same city May 9, 1864, the daughter of Solomon and Hanna Ball Stever; educated in that community and always considered it her home, although engaged in teaching and many lines of humanitarian work, and traveling elsewhere; served in Des Moines as the state's first police matron; while on the national Y.W.C.A. staff in 1895 organized the first Y.W.C.A. chapter in Des Moines, and started the first women's physical training work in Des Moines; also served on Y.W.C.A. staffs at Cedar Rapids and St. Louis, Mo.; organized physical education classes for women at the State University of Iowa in 1900 and later performed a similar duty at Coe college; became the first superintendent of the women's department of the Iowa Soldiers home in Marshalltown; for eighteen years was the president of the Fairfield high school Bible association board, and responsible for religious teaching in that school; gave up her work and returned home to be with her parents when her sister married; a member of the Christian church, the P.E.O. society and Y.W.C.A.; survived by a sister, Mrs. L. W. Van Nordstrand, Iowa City, her parents and six brothers having preceded her in death.

---

ERNEST R. BENNETT, soldier and public official, died at the U.S. veterans hospital, Des Moines, Iowa, August 20, 1950; born in Des Moines, October 13, 1869, son of Richard D. and Margaret Larkin Bennett, early Des Moines residents; educated in the Des Moines schools; entered Co. H, Iowa National Guards, July 11, 1889; appointed second lieutenant October 16, 1894, and promoted to first lieutenant March 5, 1895; company mustered May 30, 1898,



51st Infantry, Iowa volunteers; served in Spanish-American war and Philippine insurrection; appointed captain, Iowa National Guard, February 15, 1900, major March 26, 1900, lieutenant colonel February 17, 1902, and colonel August 23, 1909; transferred as colonel to 3rd Infantry from 55th, July 4, 1915; mustered in United States service June 26, 1916; engaged in Mexican border service; drafted as colonel of infantry August 5, 1917, and assigned commander 168th Infantry, in the Rainbow division, serving as its first colonel; was overseas from November 14, 1917 to February 17, 1919; with regiment in the engagements at Champagne-Marne, Aisne-Marne, Luneville, Baccarat and Esperance-Souain, France, and honorably discharged June 6, 1919; engaged in real estate business, and was secretary of the Country Club Inv. Co.; elected as treasurer of Polk county, Iowa, in 1921, serving in that capacity until 1924; elected Polk county supervisor in 1926 and served until his retirement in 1940; was first president of the Veterans of the Rainbow division; the Col. E. R. Bennett chapter named for him, and his portrait unveiled at a chapter meeting with ceremonies January 12, 1945; active in Des Moines civic affairs and a Republican; ill at the U. S. veterans hospital at Des Moines for six years prior to his death; survived by his widow, the former Lee S. Schmucker, and two daughters, Dorothy and Peggie.

---

AMIEL LOUIS KILLIAN, merchant and civic leader, died at Cedar Rapids, Iowa, September 2, 1950; born in Saunders county, Nebraska, August 27, 1874, a son of Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Killian; attended school at North Bend and Wahoo, Nebraska, graduating from the high school at the latter place, remaining there until 1907, except for a year in the army service in the Philippines during the Spanish-American war; early merchandising experience secured there in the store of a brother; married in 1900 to Floy Hutchinson, of Peru, Nebraska, who with a son, Herbert, survives; opened a store in Norfolk, Nebraska, in 1907, removing to Cedar Rapids four years later, going into business there with his brother Edward and a nephew, James; the enterprise expanding through the intervening years from a \$300,000 volume to the \$5 million mark in annual sales; active in civic affairs, devoting much time to cultural and community betterment in varied lines; served as president of Cornell College board of trustees ten years, and upon many Coe college committees, several times as chairman; a president and leader in the Cedar Rapids chamber of commerce, and national counselor in the United States chamber; owned an extensive farm east of the city and active upon the All-Iowa fair board; aggressive in church work and served for twenty years as president of the St. Paul's Methodist church board of trustees;

a member of the Elks lodge, and a supporter of 4-H clubs, baseball associations and other healthful sports.

---

**EARL CADDOCK**, soldier, wrestler and oil executive, died August 25, at Walnut, Iowa; born February 27, 1888, at Huron, South Dakota, and at an early age removed with the family to Chicago, where the father met an accidental death; from the age of fourteen lived with an uncle on a farm near Berea, Iowa, where he began wrestling with other farm boys; served overseas in World War I, having just previously won the world title as a professional wrestler, the championship having come to him on April 9, 1917; married in July the same year to Grace Mickel of Walnut, who was teaching school at Anita, where Caddock was then making his headquarters; with Frank Gotch, another Iowa champion wrestler, who had retired, was idolized and lionized the country over; became ill in France and was returned home, never wrestling so well again and eventually losing his title in 1920; came to Walnut that year and conducted an automobile agency until 1932; later removed to Omaha and became president of the United Petroleum corporation, continuing eleven years until his retirement two years previous to his death; survived by his widow, four children, two brothers, a sister and five grandchildren.

---

**IRA N. CROW**, physician and state health officer, died at his home in Fairfield, Iowa, May 10, 1950; born at Webster, Iowa, December 11, 1881; married Ermabeth Brown, August 30, 1916, at Marengo, Iowa, where the doctor then was in the medical practice; removed to Fairfield in 1922, where he has since resided, and at the time of his death had been a physician for 42 years; a member of the Jefferson county medical association and its secretary for a number of years; appointed a member of the Iowa board of health in 1945, and also has been a member of the Iowa State Medical Association; served with the armed forces in World War I, and was an officer in the State Guard Medical Detachment in Fairfield in World War II; a member and past president of the Fairfield Rotary club, and a Methodist; besides his wife is survived by a daughter, Barbara Jeanne, at home; a son, Herbert M. Crow, Casper, Wyoming; and a granddaughter; one son having preceded him in death.

---

**ELMER P. CORWIN**, farmer, legislator and official, died at Des Moines, Iowa, July 29, 1950; born on a farm near Fruitland, Muscatine county, Iowa, July 15, 1883; resided in the same community the greater portion of his life; for a period of thirty-five years was a grower and shipper of Muscatine island melons and produce; married Jessie E. Smith of Chariton, Iowa, October 21, 1908;

elected to the Iowa state senate in 1934 and re-elected in 1938; appointed industrial commissioner of Iowa in 1943 and reappointed in 1949; a member of the Masonic bodies, Knights of Pythias and the Methodist church; survived by his widow and a son, Donald F. of Muscatine, a daughter, Mrs. R. A. Weber, of State College, Mississippi, a brother, Ray of Fruitland, and a sister, Mrs. Pearl Hoyt of Muscatine.

---

EDWARD H. BIRMINGHAM, U. S. revenue collector and livestock official, died November 18, 1950, at Des Moines, Iowa; born April 5, 1880, in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and came as a child to Sioux City, Iowa, where he has since resided; active in the livestock business since boyhood, eventually becoming the head of the Birmingham Livestock and Commission Co., of the Sioux City stock yards; participated in local politics, and in 1935 became chairman of the state Democratic committee; appointed by President F. D. Roosevelt as revenue collector for Iowa in 1941; served as city assessor for many years, the civil service commission, and upon the city planning board; a member of the Elks lodge, Knights of Columbus and the Catholic church; married Mary Louise Johnson, June 19, 1901, who died in September, 1948; survivors include three daughters, Mildred and Mrs. Loretta Dickinson of Sioux City and Mrs. Francis Casey of Marion, Iowa; four sons, William, Melvin, Edward and Jack, all of Sioux City; another son, Pfc. George G., 21, U. S. marine corps, was killed in action March 5, 1945, on Iwo Jima.

---

OSCAR HALE, lawyer and jurist, died at Burlington, Iowa, December 8, 1950; born in Wapello, Iowa, February 27, 1867, son of John and Clara Rhodes Hale, both natives of Ohio; attended public schools and graduated from college at Valparaiso, Indiana; taught school and was a city superintendent at Holton, Kansas, for five years; admitted to the bar in Kansas in 1893; completed a two-year course at the University of Iowa college of law in one year and admitted to the bar in Iowa in May 1894; a law partner with his father at Wapello in the Hale & Hale firm for seventeen years until the death of the senior member in 1909; served two terms as county attorney and was appointed district judge in 1913, which office he held until he resigned in December 1938 to take a place upon the Iowa supreme court, in which position he continued until his death; married to Carrie S. Sillick February 20, 1899, who survives with a son, John Hale, a Burlington lawyer, and a sister, Nellie Hale, of Wapello; a long-time member of the Masonic bodies, the Elks, and a Republican.



Copyright of *Annals of Iowa* is the property of State of Iowa, by & through the State Historical Society of Iowa and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.